Title: The Discourses of Development in Postcolonial India: A Reflection on the Polemical Writings of Arundhati Roy and Ramachandra Guha

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Synopsis

In my dissertation I shall try to explore, analyze and study the discourses of development by comparing and contrasting the polemical writings of writer cum activist Arundhati Roy and environmental sociologist RamachandraGuha. Here, I shall engage with Roy's *Broken Republic,The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, *Listening to Grasshoppers,An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* and Ramachandra Guha's *The Unquiet Woods*, *How Much Should A Person Consume? Thinking through the Environment* and *Environmentalism : A Global History*. Roy denounces the globalization-centric concepts of "economic-reforms", deregulation and privatization. But she ardently calls for pluralizationof the developmental projects so that people of weaker sections of society can participate in it.Guha does not totally contest and denude the discourse of development. He asserts that ordinary citizens want to enjoy the fruits of modern science, technology and global markets, provided the forces of developmental projects take into account the three ideas – economic efficiency, ecological stability and some kind of social equity.

To make a comparative study between Arundhati Roy and Ramachandra Guha's polemical writings is not an erroneous conflation.Now, it is hardly thought that there is a clear-cut difference between literary and non-literary modes of signification. As a student of literature, I attempt to study the discourses of development which have strong connection with political economy, sociology, environment and ecology. But there is hardly any substantial research work that compares and contrasts Roy and Guha's positions in their polemics in the larger context of development. So this is still an untrodden research area which I think has a wider significance in the domain of the discourse of development and modernization in postcolonial India.

To define development accurately is notoriously difficult because it consists of multiplesocial,, economic and cultural dimensions. But to our common sense, it denotes a state of well-being or a process associated with ideas as material prosperity, economic growth, social and individual welfare etc.However there are three definitions of development.The first idea of development denotes 'development' as a process of structural social change. It was prevalent in 1950s and 1960s.The second concept of 'development'seen as 'a vision or measure of progressive change'.This is primarily related to the achievement of poverty eradication and of the millennium development goals. When the first two conceptions of the idea 'development' denote the vision of change and outcomes, the third one foregrounds that development consists of' bad' change and 'bad' outcomes through the imposition of Western ethnocentric notions of development upon the Third World. This is the post-modern definition of development which has strong connection with 'post-development', 'postcolonial' and 'post-structuralist' perspectives on the concept 'development'. The post-modern theory perceives development as a

'discourse' which is a set of ideas and understanding that structure how people think about and understand the world. The primary aim of this approach is that it sees development and poverty as social constructs that do not exist in an objective sense beyond the discourse. On the other hand, the post-development theory and its proponents like Arturo Escober,wolfgang Sachs, Ashis Nandi, Vandana Shiva and many others assert that development is constructed , unreal and misleading which wants to serve the interest of developed countries through the imposition of western economy and its system of power on the developing countries like India. Sachs, in*The Development Dictionary* (1995), and Escoberin his *Encountering Development* see the development since second world war as a direct continuation of colonial project. In my dissertation, I shall try to examine the study of the development as a discursive field by comparing and contrasting the polemical writings of Arundhati Roy and Ramachandra Guha.

Arundhati Roy punctures the myth of development, science, modernization and neo-liberal globalization. She perceives the discourse of development as eco-cidal and heinously detrimental to the social, economic and cultural fabrics of tribes and Dalits in India. In her essay "Mr Chidambaram's war", Roy talks about indiscriminate mining and depletion of mineral rich forests and hills of central India which has been encroached by Maoist insurgency She dismantles the state-sponsored "development –mantra". and discovers that "over the past five or so, the governments of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal have signed hundreds of MoUs with corporate houses, worth several billion rupees, all of them secret, for steel plants, sponge-iron factories, power plants, aluminum refineries, dams and mines[Roy,44]. She thinks that Indian state is actually owned by few multinational companies who are bolstered by the discourse of western hegemony. According to her in the name of progress and development, Indian government equates the idea of 'dam-building' to 'nation building'. She exposes heinous impact of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the lives of the villagers in her essay "The Greater Common Good": "They're brazen means of taking water, land and irrigation away from the poor and gifting it to the rich. Ecologically they're in the doghouse. They lay the earth to waste. They cause floods, waterlogging, salinity, they spread disease. There is mounting evidence that links big dams to earthquakes."(Roy,57-58). Roy asserts that shutting down of the dam building in the first world has prompted it to transfer the industry to the third world "in the name of Development Aid"(Roy58).In her essay "The End of Imagination", Roy attacks Indian government's decision to go nuclear in the name of science and modernity. In tune with the post-developmental school of thought she disapproves the growth of GDP as a source of wealth and employment.

In his polemical writings, Guha talks about ideological conflicts over large dams. He asserts that on the one side the interest of subsistence oriented peasants, on the other the interest of urban centres and industry. In his book "The Unquiet Woods", he records the Chipko Movement represented by poorer classes and castes who protected trees and lands in order to maintain their local economy and ecology. He also accuses the government and its agencies of taking away tribal's lands in the name of development and modernity. He is also extremely disgusted with the World Bank's policy .But in his book "How Much Should A Person Consume? Thinking through The Environment", Guha in the chapter titled "Authoritarianism in the Wild", accuses conservationist biologist of pursuing an elitist agenda and misanthropic vision. These extremists with a sectarian agenda and a ' trade union approach', seek to clear tribal people out of their protected areas although they may have been living there "almost as long as perhaps the tigers''.

Though my dissertation is primarily concerned with the social and cultural aspects of development in the context of postcolonial India, it will also try to take a look into the economic aspect of development defined by Amartya Sen in his book *Development as Freedom*. In this book Sen brings the well-being of human at the centre stage. According to him,development should be seen as a process of expanding freedoms. To achieve development ,he, argues, requires the removal of poverty, lack of economic opportunities, social deprivation, neglect of public services, and the machinery of repression. Sen challenges the mantra of 'growth' as a panacea for any kid of economic and social deprivation. He shows for example,how high per capita income does not necessarily correlate with greater life expectancy. So it is worth noticing that Sen is somehow in tune with Arundhati Roy, challenges the developmental mantras propagated by World Bank, IMF, WTO or bilateral development agencies in the north over the last three decades. But like RamachandraGuha, Sen has also enormous belief in the forces of markets,industries and companies. His concern is about human potential both as a means for improved economic perform and as the very purpose of economic and social activities. Both Roy and Guha express their concern for the displacement and dispossession of human population and environmental degradation on account of the projects of development and modernization in postcolonial India. But Roy severely denounces state-backed development discourse as a product of a new kind of imperialism and capitalism. In tune with post-developmental school of thought, she sees development as an instrument of state authority, and as a mechanism by which to implement a gigantic technological and oppressive projects on people in the name of development which is hardly rid of hegemonic market forces. Therefore, Roy dismisses the Statist position which is bent on enhancing the globalization-centric concepts of economic reforms.Guha also criticizes the World Bank's role in development because it attempts one governmental plan without making any rational enquiry into local issues of many Third World countries.But he does not attack developmental projects blindly.He criticizes ArudhatiRoy who sees no good in market, state and science. Guha writes that Roy has given a new meaning to environmental extremism in his article " Perils of Extremism". The dissertation will tentatively bedivided into the following chapters-1. Defining Development 2.Environment, Displacement and the Discourse of Development 3.Arundhati Roy and Discourse of Development 4.RamachandraGuha and Discourse of Development 5. A Comparative Study of Roy and Guha's Position in Select Polemical Writings 6.Conclusion.

I think Roy shows a post-developmental critique of modernity as well as a postcolonial voice of resistance against the very discourse of development.On the other hand,Guha thinks society would have to work with "progressive minded" industries and bureaucrats in order to have thefruits of modernization. Guha dismisses agrarian romantic environmentalists who think ecological degradation as a larger failure of modernity itself. How far Roy embraces the position of the post development theoryregarding the discourse of development? To what extent Guha's responses refute the position of the post development theorists and tend to be in tune with "new traditionalists"?The dissertation will try to critically respond to these questions. It will also try to investigate where the opinions of Roy and Guha meet and diverge.

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